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THE PRESENT HOUR

PERCY MACKAYE



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THE PRESENT HOUR



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Percy MacKaye

THE PRESENT HOUR

A Book of Poems

BY

PERCY MACKAYE

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1914

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To
THE VALIANT DEFENDERS
OF CIVILIZATION
THE BELGIANS

PREFACE

POSTERITY alone can correctly estimate and appor-
tion the right and wrong of the great war in Europe.

At the present hour, we who look on from neutral
America can but judge the war's issues by the facts
and arguments laid before us by the press and spokes-
men of all parties in the conflict.

By such evidence, the sympathies of our citizens,
by overwhelming majority, are with the cause of the
Allies.

In thus sympathizing with the Allies, we do so,
I believe, whole-heartedly in the faith (based on the
declared policy of English leaders) that they are
waging against militarism a fight to lessen world
armament and the political oppression of small na-
tions. If they win and the stipulations of peace
should prove otherwise, our revulsion of feeling
would surely be commensurate.

It is conceivable, though hardly probable, that future evidence may alter our judgment of the belligerents. Our reasons remain open to conviction. But no future contingencies can, or should, stay us now from taking thought and expressing it.

In view of the world-misery involved by the war, our reaction, while dispassionate, cannot possibly be unimpassioned. Not to feel its awful issues passionately would be uncivilized.

Confronted by moral and social issues of a conflict the most poignant in history, it becomes for us—as neutrals, who alone may help to form untainted world-opinion—a pressing duty and privilege to express ourselves.

PERCY MACKAYE.

CORNISH, NEW HAMPSHIRE,
October, 1914.

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THE PRESENT HOUR

I

WAR

FIGHT

THE TALE OF A GUNNER ¹

I

JOCK bit his mittens off and blew his thumbs;
He scraped the fresh sleet from the frozen sign:
MEN WANTED — VOLUNTEERS. Like gusts of brine
 He whiffed deliriums
Of sound — the droning roar of rolling rolling drums
And shrilling fifes, like needles in his spine,
And drank, blood-bright from sunrise and wild shore,
 The wine of war.

¹In commemoration of the last naval battle between English-speaking peoples. See note at end of volume.

With ears and eyes he drank and dizzy brain
Till all the snow danced red. The little shacks
That lined the road of muffled hackmatacks
 Were roofed with the red stain,
Which spread in reeling rings on icy-blue Champlain
And splotched the sky like daubs of sealing-wax,
That darkened when he winked, and when he stared
 Caught fire and flared.

MEN WANTED — VOLUNTEERS! The village street,
Topped by the slouching store and slim flagpole,
Loomed grand as Rome to his expanding soul;
 Grandly the rhythmic beat
Of feet in file and flags and fifes and filing feet,
The roar of brass and unremitting roll
Of drums and drums bewitched his boyish mood —
 Till he hallooed.

His strident echo stung the lake's wild dawn
And startled him from dreams. Jock rammed his cap

And rubbed a numb ear with the furry flap,
Then bolted like a faun,
Bounding through shin-deep sleigh-ruts in his shaggy
brawn,
Blowing white frost-wreaths from red mouth agap
Till, in a gabled porch beyond the store,
He burst the door:

“Mother!” he panted. “Hush! Your Pa ain’t up;
He’s worser since this storm. What’s struck ye so?”
“It’s volunteers!” The old dame stammered “Oh!”
And stopped, and stirred her sup
Of morning tea, and stared down in the trembling cup.
“They’re musterin’ on the common now.” “I know”
She nodded feebly; then with sharp surmise
She raised her eyes:

She raised her eyes, and poured their light on him
Who towered glowing there — bright lips apart,

Cap off, and brown hair tousled. With quick smart

She felt the room turn dim

And seemed she heard, far off, a sound of cherubim

Soothing the sudden pain about her heart. —

How many a lonely hour of after-woe

She saw him so!

“Jock!” And once more the white lips murmured

“Jock!”

Her fingers slipped; the spilling teacup fell

And shattered, tinkling — but broke not the spell.

His heart began to knock,

Jangling the hollow rhythm of the ticking clock.

“Mother, it’s fight, and men are wanted!” “Well,

Ah well, it’s men may kill us women’s joys,

It’s men — not boys!”

“I’m seventeen! I guess that seventeen —”

“My little Jock!” “Little! I’m six-foot-one.

(Scorn twitched his lip) You saw me, how I skun

The town last Halloween

At wrastlin'." (Now the mother shifted tack.) "But

Jean?

You won't be leavin' *Jean?*" "I guess a gun

Won't rattle *her*." He laughed, and turned his
head.

His face grew red.

"But if it doos — a gal don't understand:

It's fight!" "Jock boy, your Pa can't last much
more,

And who's to mind the stock — to milk and chore?"

Jock frowned and gnawed his hand.

"Mother, it's *men* must mind the stock — our own
born land,

And lick the invaders." Slowly in the door

Stubbed the old worn-out man. "Woman, let be!

It's liberty:

"It's struck him like fork-lightnin' in a pine.

I felt it, too, like that in Seventy-six;

And now, if 'twa'n't for creepin' pains and cricks

And this one leg o' mine,

I'd holler young Jerusalem like him, and jine

The fight; but fight don't come from burnt-out
wicks;

It comes from fire." "Mebbe," she said, "it comes

From fifes and drums."

"Dad, all the boys are down from the back hills.

The common's cacklin' like hell's cocks and hens;

There's swords and muskets stacked in the cow pens

And knapsacks in the mills;

They say at Isle aux Noix redcoats are holding
drills,

And we're to build a big fleet at Vergennes.

Dad, can't I go?" "I reckon you 're a man:

Of course you can.

"I'll do the chores to home, you do 'em *thar*!"

"Dad!" — "Lad!" The men gripped hands and
gazed upon

The mother, when the door flew wide: There shone

A young face like a star,

A gleam of bitter-sweet 'gainst snowy islands far,

A freshness, like the scent of cinnamon,

Tingeing the air with ardor and bright sheen.

Jock faltered: "Jean!"

"Jock, don't you hear the drums? I dreamed all night

I heard 'em, and they woke me in black dark.

Quick, ain't you comin'? Can't you hear 'em?

Hark!

The men-folks are to fight.

I wish I was a man!" Jock felt his throat clutch
tight.

"Men-folks!" It lit his spirit like a spark

Flashing the pent gunpowder of his pride.

"Come on!" he cried.

“Here — wait!” The old man stumped to the back
wall

And handed down his musket. “You’ll want this;
And mind what game you’re after, and don’t miss.

Goodbye: I guess that’s all
For now. Come back and get your duds.” Jock,
looming tall

Beside his glowing sweetheart, stooped to kiss
The little shrunken mother. Tiptoe she rose
And clutched him — close.

In both her twisted hands she held his head
Clutched in the wild remembrance of dim years —
A baby head, suckling, half dewed with tears;
A tired boy abed
By candlelight; a laughing face beside the red
Log-fire; a shock of curls beneath her shears —
The bright hair falling. Ah, she tried to smother
Her wild thoughts. — “Mother

“Mother!” he stuttered. “Baby Jock!” she
moaned

And looked far in his eyes. — And he was gone.

The porch door banged. Out in the blood-bright
dawn

All that she once had owned —

Her heart’s proud empire — passed, her life’s dream
sank unthroned.

With hands still reached, she stood there staring, wan.

“Hark, woman!” said the bowed old man, “What’s
tolling?”

Drums — drums were rolling.

II

Shy wings flashed in the orchard, *glitter, glitter*;

Blue wings bloomed soft through blossom-colored
leaves,

And *Phæbe! Phæbe!* whistled from gray eaves

Through water-shine and twitter
And spurt of flamey green. All bane of earth and
bitter

Took life and tasted sweet at the glad reprieves
Of Spring, save only in an old dame's heart
That grieved apart.

Crook-back and small, she poled the big wellsweep :
Creak went the pole ; the bucket came up brim-
ming.

On the bright water lay a cricket swimming
Whose brown legs tried to leap
But, draggling, twitched and foundered in the circling
deep.

The old dame gasped ; her thin hand snatched him,
skimming.

"Dear Lord, he's drowned !" she mumbled with dry
lips :

"The ships ! the ships !"

Gently she laid him in the sun and dried
The little dripping body. Suddenly
Rose-red gleamed through the budding apple-tree

And "Look! a letter!" cried

A laughing voice, "and lots of news for us inside!"

"How's that, Jean? News from Jock! Where —
where is he?"

"Down in Vergennes — the shipyards." "Ships!
Ah, no!

It can't be so."

"He's goin' to fight with guns and be a tar.

See here: he's wrote himself. The post was late.

He couldn't write before. The ship is great!

She's built, from keel to spar,

And called *the Saratoga*; and Jock's got a scar

Already —" "Scar?" the mother quavered.

"Wait,"

Jean rippled, "let me read." "Quick, then, my dear,

He'll want to hear —

“Jock’s Pa: I guess we’ll find him in the yard.
He ain’t scarce creepin’ round these days, poor Dan!”
She gripped Jean’s arm and stumbled as they ran,
 And stopped once, breathing hard.
Around them chimney-swallows skimmed the sheep-
 cropped sward
And yellow hornets hummed. — The sick old man
Stirred at their steps, and muttered from deep muse:
 “Well, Ma: what news?”

“From Jackie — there’s a letter!” In his chair
The bowed form sat bolt upright. “What’s he say?”
“He’s wrote to Jean. I guess it’s boys their way
 To think old folks don’t care
For letters.” “Girl, read out.” Jean smoothed her
 wilding hair
And sat beside them. Out of the blue day
A golden robin called; across the road
 A heifer lowed;

And old ears listened while youth read: “‘Friend

Jean,

Vergennes: here’s where we’ve played a Yankee trick.

I’m layin’ in my bunk by Otter Crick

And scribblin’ you this mean

Scrawl for to tell the news — what-all I’ve heerd and
seen:

Jennie, we’ve built a ship, and built her slick —

A swan! — a seven hundred forty tonner,

And I’m first gunner.

“‘You ought to seen us launch her t’other day!

Tell Dad we’ve christened her for a fight of hisn

He fought at Saratoga. Now just listen!

She’s twice as big, folks say,

As Perry’s ship that took the prize at Put-in Bay;

Yet forty days ago, hull, masts and mizzen,

The whole of her was growin’, live and limber,

In God’s green timber.

“‘I helped to fell her main-mast back in March.
The woods was snowed knee-deep. She was a wonder :

A straight white pine. She fell like roarin’ thunder
And left a blue-sky arch
Above her, bustin’ all to kindlin’s a tall larch. —
Mebbe the scart jack-rabbits skun from under !
Us boys hoorayed, and me and every noodle
Yelled Yankee-Doodle !

“‘My, how we haw’d and gee’d the big ox-sledges
Haulin’ her long trunk through the hemlock dells,
A-bellerin’ to the tinkle-tankle bells,
And blunted our ax edges
Hackin’ new roads of ice ’longside the rocky ledges.
We stalled her twice, but gave the oxen spells
And yanked her through at last on the home-clearin’. —
Lord, wa’n’t we cheerin’ !

“‘Since then I’ve seen her born, as you might say :
Born out of fire and water and men’s sweatin’,
Blast-furnace rairin’ and red anvils frettin’

And sawmills, night and day,
Screech-owlin’ like ’twas Satan’s rumhouse run away
Smellin’ of tar and pitch. But I’m forgettin’
The man that’s primed her guns and paid her score :
The Commodore.

“‘Macdonough — he’s her master, and she knows
His voice, like he was talkin’ to his hound.
There ain’t a man of her but ruther’d drownd
Than tread upon his toes ;
And yet with his red cheeks and twinklin’ eyes, a rose
Ain’t friendlier than his looks be. When he’s round,
He makes you feel like you’re a gentleman
American.

“‘But I must tell you how we’re hidin’ here.
This Otter Crick is like a crook-neck jug

And we're inside. The redcoats want to plug

The mouth, and cork our beer;

So last week Downie sailed his British lake-fleet near

To fill our channel, but us boys had dug

Big shore intrenchments, and our batteries

Stung 'em like bees

“ ‘Till they skedaddled whimperin' up the lake;

But while the shots was flyin', in the scrimmage,

I caught a ball that scotched my livin' image. —

Now Jean, for Sam Hill's sake,

Don't let-on this to Mother, for you know she'd make

A deary-me-in' that would last a grim age.

'Tain't much, but when a feller goes to war

What's he go for

“ ‘If 'tain't to fight, and take his chances?' ” Jean

Stopped and looked down. The mother did not speak.

“Go on,” said the old man. Flush tinged her cheek.

“Truly I didn't mean —

There ain't much more. He says: 'Goodbye now,
little queen;

We're due to sail for Plattsburgh this day week.

Meantime I'm hopin' hard and takin' stock.

Your obedient — Jock.' ”

The girl's voice ceased in silence. *Glitter, glitter,*

The shy wings flashed through blossom-colored
leaves,

And *Phæbe! Phæbe!* whistled from gray eaves

Through water-shine and twitter

And spurt of flamey green. But bane of thought is
bitter.

The mother's heart spurned May's sweet make-
believes,

For there, through falling masts and gaunt ships
looming,

Guns — guns were booming.

III

Plattsburgh — and windless beauty on the bay ;

Autumnal morning and the sun at seven :

Southward a wedge of wild ducks in the heaven

Dwindles, and far away

Dim mountains watch the lake, where lurking for their

prey

Lie, with their muzzled thunders and pent levin,

The warships — Eagle, Preble, Saratoga,

Ticonderoga.

And now a little wind from the northwest

Flutters the trembling blue with snowy flecks.

A gunner, on Macdonough's silent decks,

Peers from his cannon's rest,

Staring beyond the low north headland. Crest on crest

Behind green spruce-tops, soft as wildfowls' necks,

Glide the bright spars and masts and whitened wales

Of bellying sails.

Rounding, the British lake-birds loom in view

Ruffling their wings in silvery arrogance :

Chubb, Linnet, Finch, and lordly Confiance

Leading with Downie's crew

The line. — With long booms swung to starboard they
heave to,

Whistling their flock of galleys who advance

Behind, then toward the Yankees, four abreast,

Tack landward, west.

Landward the watching townsfolk strew the shore ;

Mist-banks of human beings blur the bluffs

And blacken the roofs, like swarms of roosting
choughs.

Waiting the cannon's roar

A nation holds its breath for knell of Nevermore

Or peal of life : this hour shall cast the sloughs

Of generations — and one old dame's joy :

Her gunner boy.

One moment on the quarter deck Jock kneels
Beside his Commodore and fighting squad.
Their heads are bowed, their prayers go up toward
God —

Toward God, to whom appeals
Still rise in pain and mangling wrath from blind
ordeals
Of man, still boastful of his brother's blood. —
They stand from prayer. Swift comes and silently
The enemy.

Macdonough holds his men, alert, devout:
“He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea
Driven with the wind. Behold the ships, that be
So great, are turned about
Even with a little helm.” Jock tightens the blue
clout
Around his waist, and watches casually
Close-by a game-cock, in a coop, who stirs
And spreads his spurs.

Now, bristling near, the British war-birds swoop
Wings, and the Yankee Eagle screams in fire;
The English Linnet answers, aiming higher,
And *crash* along Jock's poop
Her hurtling shot of iron crackles the game-cock's coop,
Where lo! the ribald cock, like a town crier,
Strutting a gunslide, flaps to the cheering crew —
Yankee-doodle-doo!

Boys yell, and yapping laughter fills the roar:
“You bet we'll do 'em!” “You're a prophet, cocky!”
“Hooray, old rooster!” “Hip, hip, hip!” cries
Jockie.

Calmly the Commodore
Touches his cannon's fuse and fires a twenty-four.
Smoke belches black. “Huzza! That's blowed 'em
pocky!”

And Downie's men, like pins before the bowling,
Fall scatter-rolling.

Boom! flash the long guns, echoed by the galleys.

The Confiance, wind-baffled in the bay,

With both her port bow-anchors torn away,

Flutters, but proudly rallies

To broadside, while her gunboats range the water-alleys.

Then Downie grips Macdonough in the fray,

And double-shotted from his roaring flail

Hurls the black hail.

The hail turns red, and drips in the hot gloom.

Jock snuffs the reek and spits it from his mouth

And grapples with great winds. The winds blow south,

And scent of lilac bloom

Steals from his mother's porch in his still sleeping room.

Lilacs! — But now it stinks of blood and drouth!

He staggers up, and stares at blinding light:

“God! This is fight!”

Fight! — The sharp loathing retches in his loins;

He gulps the black air, like a drowner swimming,

Where little round suns in a dance go rimming

The dark with golden coins :

Round him and round the splintering masts and jangled
quoins

Reel, rattling, and overhead he hears the hymning —
Lonely and loud — of ululating choirs

Strangling with wires.

Fight ! — But no more the roll of chanting drums,

The fiffing flare, the flags, the magic spume

Filling his spirit with a wild perfume ;

Now noisome anguish numbs

His sense, that mocks and leers at monstrous vacuums.

Whang ! splits the spanker near him, and the boom

Crushes Macdonough, in a jumbled wreck,

Stunned on the deck.

No time to glance where wounded leaders lie,

Or think on fallen sparrows in the storm —

Only to fight ! The prone commander's form

Stirs, rises stumblingly

And gropes where, under shrieking grape and musketry,
Men's bodies wamble like a mangled swarm
Of bees. He bends to sight his gun again,
Bleeding, and then —

Oh, out of void and old oblivion
And reptile slime first rose Apollo's head :
And God in likeness of Himself, 'tis said,
Created such an one,
Now shaping Shakspere's forehead, now Napoleon,
Various, by infinite invention bred,
In His own image moulding beautiful
The human skull.

Jock lifts his head ; Macdonough sights his gun
To fire — but in his face a ball of flesh,
A whizzing clod, has hurled him in a mesh
Of tangled rope and tun,
While still about the deck the lubber clod is spun

And, bouncing from the rail, lies in a plesh
Of oozing blood, upstaring eyeless, red —

A gunner's head.

* * * * *

Above the ships, enormous from the lake,
Rises a wraith — a phantom dim and gory,
Lifting her wondrous limbs of smoke and glory;

And little children quake

And lordly nations bow their foreheads for her sake,
And bards proclaim her in their fiery story;
And in her phantom breast, heartless, unheeding,

Hearts — hearts are bleeding.

IV

Macdonough lies with Downie in one land.
Victor and vanquished long ago were peers.
Held in the grip of peace an hundred years

England has laid her hand

In ours, and we have held (and still shall hold) the band
That makes us brothers of the hemispheres;

Yea, still shall keep the lasting brotherhood

Of law and blood.

Yet one whose terror racked us long of yore

Still wreaks upon the world her lawless might:

Out of the deeps again the phantom Fight

Looms on her wings of war,

Sowing in armèd camps and fields her venomèd spore,

Embattling monarch's whim against man's right,

Trampling with iron hoofs the blooms of time

Back in the slime.

We, who from dreams of justice, dearly wrought,

First rose in the eyes of patient Washington,

And through the molten heart of Lincoln won

To liberty forgot,

Now, standing lone in peace 'mid titans strange dis-

traught,

Pray much for patience, more — God's will be done! —

For vision and for power nobly to see

The world made free.

THE CONFLICT: SIX SONNETS

[August, 1914]

I

TO WILLIAM WATSON IN ENGLAND

SINGER of England's ire across the sea,
Your austere voice, electric from the deep,
Speaks our own yearning, and our spirits sweep
To Europe's allied honor. — Painfully,
Bowed with a planet's lonely burden, we
Held our hot hearts in leash, but now they leap
Their ban, like young hounds belling from their keep,
To bait the Teuton wolf of tyranny.

What! Would he throw us sops of sugared art
And poisoned commerce, snarling: "So! lie still
Till I have shown my fangs, and torn the heart
Of half the world, and gorged my sanguine fill!" —
Now, England, let him see: Rage as he will,
He cannot tear our plighted souls apart.

II

AMERICAN NEUTRALITY

How shall we keep an armed neutrality
With our own souls? Our souls belie our lips,
That seek to hold our passion in eclipse
And hide the wound of our sharp sympathy,
Saying: "One's neighbor differs; he might be
Kindled to wrath, were one to wield the whips
Of truth." — Great God! A red Apocalypse
Flames on the blinded world: and what do we?

Peace! do we cry? Peace is the godlike plan
We love and dedicate our children to;
Yet England's cause is ours: The rights of man,
Which little Belgium battles for anew,
Shall *we* recant? No! — Being American,
Our souls cannot keep neutral and keep true.

III

PEACE

PEACE! — But there is no peace. To hug the thought
Is but to clasp a lover who thinks lies.

Go: look your earnest neighbor in the eyes
And read the answer there. Peace is not bought
By distance from the fight. Peace must be fought
And bled for: 'tis a dream whose horrid price
Is haggled for by dread realities;
Peace is not paid till dreamers are distraught.

Would we not close our ears against these ills,
Urging our hearts: "Be calm! America
Is called upon to rebuild a world." — But ah!
How shall we nobly build with neutral wills?
Can we be calm while Belgian anguish shrills?
Or would we crown with peace — Caligula?

IV

WILSON

PATIENCE — but peace of heart we cannot choose ;
Nor would he wish us cravenly to keep
Aloof in soul, who — large in statesmanship
And justice — sent our ships to Vera Cruz.
Patience must wring our hearts, while we refuse
To launch our country on that crimson deep
Which breaks the dikes of Europe, but we sleep
Watchful, still waiting by the awful fuse.

Wisdom he counsels, and he counsels well
Whose patient fortitude against the fret
And sneer of time has stood inviolable.
We love his goodness and will not forget.
With him we pause beside the mouth of hell : —
The wolf of Europe has not triumphed yet.

V

KRUPPISM

CROWNED on the twilight battlefield, there bends
A crooked iron dwarf, and delves for gold,
Chuckling: "One hundred thousand gatlings — sold!"
And the moon rises, and a moaning rends
The mangled living, and the dead distends,
And a child cowers on the chartless wold,
Where, searching in his safety-vault of mold,
The kobold kaiser cuts his dividends.

We, who still wage his battles, are his thralls
And dying do him homage; yea, and give
Daily our living souls to be enticed
Into his power. So long as on war's walls
We build engines of death that he may live,
So long shall we serve Krupp instead of Christ.

VI

THE REAL GERMANY

BISMARCK — or rapt Beethoven with his dreams :
Ah, which was blind? Or which bespoke his race? —
That breed which nurtured Heine's haunting grace,
And Goethe, mastering Olympic themes
Of meditation, Mozart's golden gleams,
And Leibnitz charting realms of time and space,
Great-hearted Schiller, and that fairy brace
Of brothers who first trailed the goblin streams.

Bismarck for these builded an iron tomb,
And clanged the door, and turned a kaiser's key;
And simple folk, that once danced merrily
Their May-ring rites, march now in roaring gloom
Toward that renascent dawn when the black womb
Of buried guns gives birth to Germany.

THE LADS OF LIEGE

[“*Horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgæ.*” — CAESAR’S
“Commentaries”]

THE lads of Liege, beyond our eyes
They lie where beauty’s laurels be —
With lads of old Thermopylæ,
Who stayed the storming Persians.

The lads of Liege, on glory’s field
They clasp the hands of Roland’s men,
Who lonely faced the Saracen
Meeting the dark invasion.

The lads — the deathless lads of Liege,
They blazon through our living world
Their land — the little land that hurled
Olympian defiance.

“Now make us room, now let us pass;
Our monarch suffers no delay.
To stand in mighty Cæsar’s way
Beseems not Lilliputians.”

“We make no room; you shall not pass,
For freedom says your monarch nay!
And we have stood in Cæsar’s way
Through freedom’s generations.

“And here we stand till freedom fall
And Cæsar cry, ere we succumb,
Once more his *horum omnium*
Fortissimi sunt Belgæ.”

The monarch roars an iron laugh
And cries on God to man his guns;
But Belgian mothers bore them sons
Who man the souls within them:

They bar his path, they hold their pass,
They blaze in glory of the Gaul
Till Cæsar cries again "Of all
The bravest are the Belgians!"

O lads of Liege, brave lads of Liege,
Your souls through glad Elysium
Go chanting: *horum omnium*
Fortissimi sunt Belgæ!

CARNAGE: SIX SONNETS

[September, 1914]

I

DOUBT

So thin, so frail the opalescent ice
Where yesterday, in lordly pageant, rose
The monumental nations — the repose
Of continents at peace! Realities
Solid as earth they seemed; yet in a trice
Their bastions crumbled in the surging floes
Of unconceivable, inhuman woes,
Gulfed in a mad, unmeaning sacrifice.

We, who survive that world-quake, cower and start,
Searching our hidden souls with dark surmise:
So thin, so frail — is reason? Patient art —
Is it all a mockery, and love all lies?
Who sees the lurking Hun in childhood's eyes?
Is hell so near to every human heart?

II

THE GREAT NEGATION

WHEN that great-minded man, Sir Edward Grey,
Said to the hypocritic 'prince of peace':

"Let us confer, who hold the destinies
Of Europe, ere the tempest breaks, and stay
Its carnage!" the proud despot answered *nay*,
And by that great negation loosed the seas
And winds of multitudinous miseries
To rage around his empire for their prey.

He might have uttered "Peace": Peace would have
been.

He might have abdicated ere he fought
For such Satanic empire; but to win
Power he refused. Therefore a rankling thought
Festers henceforth with that refusal's sin:—
He might have saved the world, and he would not.

III

LOUVAIN

SERENE in beauty's olden lineage,
Calm as the star that hears the Angelus toll,
Louvain — the scholar's crypt, the artist's goal,
The cloistral shrine of hallowed pilgrimage
Rapt in the dreams of many an ardent age,
Louvain, the guileless city of man's soul,
Is blotted from the world — a bloodied scroll,
Ravaged to sate a drunken Teuton's rage.

His lust shall have its laurel. That red sword
He ravished with, Time's angel shall again
Grasp to sere *him*, and deify him Lord
Of Infamy; yea, brand him with its stain
Naked in night, abhorrent and abhorr'd,
Where the dead hail him *William of Louvain!*

IV

RHEIMS

APOLLO mourns another Parthenon

In ruins! — Is the God of Love awake?

And we — must we behold the world's heart break

For peace and beauty ravished, and look on

Dispassionate? — Rheims' gloried fane is gone:

Not by a planet's rupture, nor the quake

Of subterranean titans, but to slake

The vengeance of a Goth Napoleon.

O Time, let not the anguish numb or pall

Of that remembrance! Let no callous heal

Our world-wound, till our kindled pities call

The parliament of nations, and repeal

The vows of war. Till then, pain keep us thrall!

More bitter than to battle — is to feel.

V

KULTUR

If men must murder, pillage, sack, despoil,
Let it not be (lest angels laugh) in the name
Of sacred Culture. Vulcan still goes lame
Though servile Muses poultice him with oil
Of sleek Hypocrisy. They waste their toil
Whose boast of light and sweetness takes its claim
From deeds of night and wormwood, which defame
Fair Culture's shrine and make her gods recoil.

No; let the imperial Visigoth put off
His borrowed toga, boast aloud his slain
In naked savagery, and make his scoff
Of Attic graces. So when once again
He asks for Culture's crown, 'twill be enough
To answer him : *Once Rheims was — and Louvain !*

VI

DESTINY

WE are what we imagine, and our deeds
Are born of dreaming. Europe acts to-day
Epics that little children in their play
Conjured, and statesmen murmured in their creeds;
In barrack, court and school were sown those seeds,
Like Dragon's teeth, which ripen to affray
Their sowers. Dreams of slaughter rise to slay,
And fate itself is stuff that fancy breeds.

Mock, then, no more at dreaming, lest our own
Create for us a like reality!
Let not imagination's soil be sown
With armed men but justice, so that we
May for a world of tyranny atone
And dream from that despair — democracy.

THE MUFFLED DRUMS

For brothers laid in blood,
For lovers sundered,
Defeated motherhood
And manhood plundered —
We moan, moan the faith of man forgotten.

For human vision bleared
And childhood bleeding,
For ripening harvests sere
Before the seeding —
We mourn, mourn the beauty unbegotten.

We were the wanton ones
In old wines sunken,
Who sent the nations' sons
Forth, reeling drunken
With blare and rhythm of war's ruthless glory.

Now in our pulse no more

 The old wines quicken,

For the bannered glory of war

 Trails draggled and stricken,

And the blood-red beast crawls home, blinded and
 hoary :

But we are the beating hearts

 Of women, whose yearning

Shall harass the beast with darts

 Of their myriad burning

Till the Angel of God remould him — an image human.

Yea, we are the chanting wills

 Of women, whose sorrow

Rebels at the age-borne ills

 Of a man-built morrow,

And we chant, chant the world redeemed by Woman.

ANTWERP ¹

TOWERS — eternal towers against the sky :
Dawn-touched, noon-flamed, night-mantled and moon-
flecked !

The tenuous dreams of man, the architect,
Imagining in stone what may not die
Though man, the anarchist, dream enginery
For its destruction : towers of intellect,
Towers of aspiration — torn and wrecked,
Profaned by robber sacrilege : ah, why ?

Reason shall ask, and answer shall be given ;
Justice shall ask, and deal to those insane
Their dark asylums, but to those — the vain
Of lustful power, how shall their souls be shriven ? —
They shall be raised on infamy's renown
And from their towers of tyranny hurled down.

¹ See note at end of volume.

MAGNA CARTA

MAGNA CARTA! Magna Carta!

English brothers, we have borne it

On our banners down the ages. —

Who shall scorn it?

Bitter fought-for, blood-emblazoned

With the fadeless gules of freedom,

Interbound with precious pages —

English brothers, we who shrine it

In our common heart of hearts,

Think you we can see a monarch,

Tyrant-sceptred, sanguine-shod,

Seek to rend it and malign it:

We whose sires made him sign it —

Him who deemed him next to God!

We who dreamed our world forever

Purged and rid

Of his spectre — think you, brothers,

We can watch this ghost, resurgent,
Sweep his servile hordes toward England,
And stand silent? — God forbid!

Magna Carta! Magna Carta!
Brother freemen, we who bear it
Starward — shall we see *him* tear it?
Fool or frantic,
Let him dare it!
If he reach across the Channel
He shall touch across the Atlantic: —
Scrolled with new and olden annal,
Bitter fought-for, blood-emblazoned
With the fadeless gules of freedom,
We will hand him — Magna Carta!
Yea, once more shall make him sign it
Where the centuries refine it,
Till his serfs, who now malign it,
Are made sick of him, and free
Even as we.

So, if ghostly through the sea-mist,
You behold his Mediæval
Falcon face peer violating —
Lo, with quills and Magna Carta
(Sharpened quills and Magna Carta)
In a little mead near London,
English brothers, we are waiting !

MEN OF CANADA

MEN of Canada,
Fellow Americans,

Proud our hearts beat for you over the border :

Proud of the fight you wage,

Proud of your valiant youth

Sailing to battle for freedom and order.

On our own battlefields

Many's the bout we had —

Yankee, Canadian, redcoat and ranger ;

But our old brotherhood,

Staunch through the centuries,

Shouts in our blood now to share in your danger.

Ah, it's a weary thing

Waiting and watching here,

Numbing ourselves to a frozen neutrality :

Yet, in a world at war,

'Tis our good part to keep

Patient to forge the strong peace of finality.

Though, then, our part be Peace,
Yet our free fighting souls
League with your own 'gainst the world-lust of Vandals ;
Yea, in the dreadful night,
We, with your women, weep
And for your shroudless dead burn our shrine candles.

So, by the gunless law
Of our sane borderline,
By our souls' faith, that no border can sever,
Freedom ! — now may your fight,
Waging the death of war,
Silence the demons of cannon forever !

Kin-folk of Canada,
So may your allied arms
Smite with his legions the Lord of Disorder !
God speed your noble cause !
God save your gallant sons !
Would we might sail with them — over the border !

FRANCE

HALF artist and half anchorite,
Part siren and part Socrates,
Her face — alluring fair, yet recondite —
Smiled through her salons and academies.

Lightly she wore her double mask,
Till sudden, at war's kindling spark,
Her inmost self, in shining mail and casque,
Blazed to the world her single soul — Jeanne d'Arc !

HAUPTMANN

JEAN CHRISTOPHE called to him out of the night —
Out of the storm and dark of Europe's hate,
Crying: "Where art thou, Hauptmann, who so late
Loomed as a rugged tower of human right?
Flame to the world thy lonely beacon-light
Of love for alien hearths laid desolate!" —
In answer rolled a voice infuriate
Hoarse with the fog of racial scorn and spite:

"Here am I! — Let them perish!" And hell laughed
To hear that voice — which once was wont to soar
With Hannele to heaven, and starward waft
The souls of simple weavers — rasp with war;
Yea, laughed to watch that tower's heroic shaft
Fall crumbling on the beaconless world shore.

NIETZSCHE

SOME worshipped and some bantered, when
The prophets of the drawing room
Gossiped of Jesus Christ his doom
Under the reign of Supermen,
And how the Christian world would quake
To hear what Zarathustra spake.

Lo, Zarathustra's voice has spoken :

And they, who use a mad bard's song
To vindicate a tyrant's wrong,
Point to the staring dead for token
Of their triumphant creed, enshrined
In temples of the Teuton mind.

The raving dog-star hath his season :

But when the light beyond our death
Leads back again from Nazareth
The holy star of human reason —
Then will philosophy no more
Be servile to the Muse of War.

THE CHILD-DANCERS¹

A bomb has fallen over Notre Dame:

Germans have burned another Belgian town:

Russians quelled in the east: England in qualm:

I closed my eyes, and laid the paper down.

Gray ledge and moor-grass and pale bloom of light

By pale blue seas!

What laughter of a child world-sprite,

Sweet as the horns of lone October bees,

Shrills the faint shore with mellow, old delight?

What elves are these

In smocks gray-blue as sea and ledge,

Dancing upon the silvered edge

Of darkness — each ecstatic one

Making a happy orison,

With shining limbs, to the low-sunken sun? —

¹ At end of volume see note.

See: now they cease

Like nesting birds from flight:

Demure and debonair

They troop beside their hostess' chair

To make their bedtime courtesies:

"Spokoinoi notchi! — Gute Nacht!

Bon soir! Bon soir! — Good night!"

What far-gleaned lives are these

Linked in one holy family of art? —

Dreams: dreams once Christ and Plato dreamed:

How fair their happy shades depart!

Dear God! how simple it all seemed,

Till once again

Before my eyes the red type quivered: *Slain:*

Ten thousand of the enemy. —

Then laughter! laughter from the ancient sea

Sang in the gloaming: *Athens! Galilee!*

And elfin voices called from the extinguished light: —

"Spokoinoi notchi! — Gute Nacht!

Bon soir! Bon soir! — Good night!"

BATTLEFIELDS

ON the battlefields of birth,
Lulled from pain in twilight sleep,
Languorous in calm reliance
On the Christ-like soul of science,
They whose patient soldiership
Bore the age-old pangs of earth
Till the patient seers of reason set them free —
Volunteers, whose valiant warring
Is the passion of restoring —
Mothers, gentle mothers, bless you, Germany !

By the battlefields of death,
Racked by prayers that never sleep,
Anguished with a wild defiance
Of the Satan powers of science,
They whose loving guardianship
Knit the subtle bonds of breath
Till their sons of iron tore them ruthlessly —
Victims, whose heart-blinding portion
Is their victory's abortion —
Mothers, maddened mothers, curse you, Germany !

IN MEMORIAM

MRS. WOODROW WILSON

HER gentle spirit passed with Peace —

With Peace out of a world at war
Racked by the old earth-agonies
Of kaiser, king and czar,

Where Bear and Lion crouch in lair

To rend the iron Eagle's flesh
And viewless engines of the air
Spin wide their lightning mesh,

And darkly kaiser, czar and king

With awful thunders stalk their prey. —
Yet Peace, that moves with silent wing,
Is mightier than they.

And she — our lady who has passed —

And Peace were sisters: They are gone
Together through time's holocaust
To blaze a bloodless dawn.

How otherwise the royal die

Whose power is throned on rolling drums!

Her monument of royalty

Is builded in the slums:

Her latest prayer, transformed to law,

Shall more than monarch's vow endure,

Assuaging there, with loving awe,

The anguish of the poor.

*The announcement of President Wilson's
second marriage was published
in the daily newspapers of Oct. 7
1915.*

A PRAYER OF THE PEOPLES

God of us who kill our kind !
Master of this blood-tracked Mind
Which from wolf and Caliban
Staggers toward the star of Man —
Now, on Thy cathedral stair,
God, we cry to Thee in prayer !

Where our stifled anguish bleeds
Strangling through Thine organ reeds,
Where our voiceless songs suspire
From the corpses in Thy choir —
Through Thy charred and shattered nave,
God, we cry on Thee to save !

Save us from our tribal gods !
From the racial powers, whose rods —

Wreathed with stinging serpents — stir
Odin and old Jupiter
From their ancient hells of hate
To invade Thy dawning state.

Save us from their curse of kings!
Free our souls' imaginings
From the feudal dreams of war;
Yea, God, let us nevermore
Make, with slaves' idolatry,
Kaiser, king or czar of *Thee*!

We who, craven in our prayer,
Would lay off on Thee our care —
Lay instead on *us* Thy load;
On our minds Thy spirit's goad,
On our laggard wills Thy whips
And Thy passion on our lips!

Fill us with the reasoned faith
That the prophet lies, who saith

All this web of destiny,
Torn and tangled, cannot be
Newly wove and redesigned
By the Godward human mind.

Teach us, so, no more to call
Guidance supernatural
To our help, but — heart and will —
Know ourselves responsible
For our world of wasted good
And our blinded brotherhood.

Lord, our God! to whom, from clay,
Blood and mire, Thy peoples pray —
Not from Thy cathedral's stair
Thou hearest: — Thou criest *through* our prayer
For our prayer is but the gate:
We, who pray, ourselves are fate.

THE PRESENT HOUR

II

PEACE

PANAMA HYMN

LORD of the sundering land and deep,
For whom of old, to suage thy wrath,
The floods stood upright as a heap
To shape thy host a dry-shod path,

Lo, now, from tide to sundered tide
Thy hand, outstretched in glad release,
Hath torn the eternal hills aside
To blaze a liquid path for Peace.

Thy hand, englaived in flaming steel,
Hath clutched the demons of the soil
And made their forge-fires roar and reel
To serve thy seraphim in toil ;

While round their pits the nations, bowed,
Have watched thine awful enginery
Compel, through thunderbolt and cloud,
The demigods to slave for thee.

For thee hath glaring Cyclops sweat,
And Atlas groaned, and Hercules
For thee his iron sinews set,
And thou wast lord of Rameses ;

Till now they pause, to watch thy hand
Lead forth the first leviathan
Through mazes of the jungled land,
Submissive to the will of man :

Submissive through the will of us
To thine, the universal will,
That leads, divine and devious,
To world-communions vaster still. —

The titans rest ; intense, aware,
The host of nations dumbly waits ;
The mountains lift their brows and stare ;
The tides are knocking at the gates.

Almighty of the human mind,
Unlock the portals of our sleep
That lead to visions of our kind,
And marry sundered deep to deep!

GOETHALS

A MAN went down to Panama

Where many a man had died
To slit the sliding mountains

And lift the eternal tide:

A man stood up in Panama,
And the mountains stood aside.

The Power that wrought the tide and peak

Wrought mightier the seer;

And the One who made the isthmus

He made the engineer,

And the good God he made Goethals

To cleave the hemisphere.

The reek of fevered ages rose

From poisoned jungle and strand,

Where the crumbling wrecks of failure

Lay sunk in the torrid sand —

Derelicts of old desperate hopes

And venal contraband:

Till a mind glowed white through the yellow mist
And purged the poison-mold,
And the wrecks rose up in labor,
And the fevers' knell was tolled,
And the keen mind cut the world-divide,
Untarnished by world gold :

For a poet wrought in Panama
With a continent for his theme,
And he wrote with flood and fire
To forge a planet's dream,
And the derricks rang his dithyrambs
And his stanzas roared in steam.

But the poet's mind it is not his
Alone, but a million men's :
Far visions of lonely dreamers
Meet there as in a lens,
And lightnings, pent by stormy time,
Leap through, with flame intense :

So from our age three giants loom
To vouch man's venturous soul:
Amundsen on his ice-peak,
And Peary from his pole,
And midway, where the oceans meet,
Goethals — beside *his* goal:

Where old Balboa bent his gaze
He leads the liners through,
And the Horn that tossed Magellan
Bellows a far halloo,
For where the navies never sailed
Steamed Goethals and his crew;

So nevermore the tropic routes
Need poleward warp and veer,
But on through the Gates of Goethals
The steady keels shall steer,
Where the tribes of man are led toward peace
By the prophet-engineer.

A CHILD AT THE WICKET

A LITTLE isle: it is for some
Hell's gate, for some Elysium! —
Round Ellis Isle the salt waves flow
With old-world tears, wept long ago;

Round Ellis Isle the warm waves leap
With new-world laughter from the deep,
And centuries of sadness smile
To clasp their arms round Ellis Isle.

I watched her pass the crowded piers,
A peasant child of maiden years;
Her face was toward the evening sky
Where fair Manhattan towered high;

Her yellow kerchief caught the breeze,
Her crimson kirtle flapped her knees,
As lithe she swayed to tug the band
Of swaddled bundle in her hand.

From her right hand the big load swung,
But with her left strangely she clung
To something light, which seemed a part
Of her, and held it 'gainst her heart:

A something frail, which tender hands
Had touched to song in far-off lands
On twilights, when the looms are mute:
A thing of love — a slender lute.

Hardly she seemed to know she held
That frail thing fast, but went compelled
By wonder of the dream that lay
In those bright towers across the bay.

A staggering load, a treasure light —
She bore them both, and passed from sight.
From Ellis Isle I watched her pass:
Pinned on her breast was *Lawrence, Mass.*

O little isle, you are for some
Hell's gate, for some Elysium!
Your wicket swings, and some to song
Pass on, and some to silent wrong;

But who, where hearts of toilers bleed
In songless toil, ah, who will heed —
On twilights, when the looms are mute —
A thing of love, a slender lute?

HYMN FOR EQUAL SUFFRAGE

THEY have strewn the burning hearths of Man with
darkness and with mire,

They have heaped the burning hearts of Man with
ashes of desire,

Yet from out those hearts and hearths still leaps the
quick eternal fire

Whose flame is liberty.

But the flame which once led deathward all the dazzled
fighting hordes

Lights them now to living freedom from the bondage
of their lords,

And our mothers are uprisen 'mid their sons to wrest
the swords

From hands of tyranny.

For the freedom of the laborer is freedom from his toil,
And freedom of the citizen is right to share the soil,
And the freedom of our country is our loosing of the coil

That chokes posterity.

So we who wage our devious wars, in fastness and in fen,
Let us claim our common birthright in the living sun
again,

Till the battle of the beasts becomes the reasoning of
men,

And joy our destiny.

Let us march then, all together, not because our leaders
call,

But at summons of the mighty soul of man within us all,
Men and women, equal comrades, let us storm the
nation's wall

And cry "Equality!"

For the vote that brings to woman and to man life's
common bread,

Is mightier than the mindless gun that leaves a million
dead;

And the rights of Man shall triumph where once men
and women bled

When mothers of men are free.

LEXINGTON

“WHERE is the little town of Lexington?

Oh, I have lost my way!” —

But all the brawling people hurried on :

Why should they stay

To watch a tattered boy, with wistful face,

Dazed by the roaring strangeness of the place? —

In wondering scorn

Turning, he tapped the powder from his powder-horn.

“Where is my blood-bright hearth of Lexington?” —

Strangely the kindling cry

Startled the crowded street; yet everyone

Still scrambled by

Into the shops and markets; till at last

Went by a pensive scholar. As he passed,

Sudden, to whet

Of steel, he heard a flint-lock flash : their faces met.

“What like, then, is your little Lexington?”

“Oh, sir, it is my home,

Which I have lost.”—The scholar’s sharp eyes shone.

“Come with me! Come,

And I will show you, old and hallowed, all

Its maps and marks and shafts memorial.”—

Out of the roar

They went, into green silence where old elm trees soar.

“Here is your little town of Lexington :

Let fall your eyes

And read the old inscription on this stone :

‘Beneath this lies

The first who fell in our dear country’s fight

For revolution and the freeman’s right.’”

The boy’s eyes fell,

But shining swiftly rose : “Yes, I remember well !

“Yet there lies not my lost home Lexington :

For none who fall

At Lexington is buried under stone ;

And eyes of all

Who fight at Lexington look up at God

Not down upon His servants under sod

Whose souls are sped ;

They lie who say in Lexington free men are dead."

"My son, I said not so of Lexington.

'There lie the bones,'

I said, 'of great men, and their souls are gone.'

God sends but once

His lightning-flash to strike the sacred spot.

Our great sires are departed." — "They are not !

I am alive.

I fought at Lexington ; you see, I still survive !

"And still I live to fight at Lexington.

I am come far

From Russian steppes and Balkan valleys, wan

With ghostly war,

Where still the holy watchword in the fight

Was *Revolution and the freeman's right!* —

Now I am come

Back with that battle-cry to help my own dear home.

“Here, here it lies — my lost home Lexington!

Not there in dust,

But here in the great highway of the sun,

Where still the lust

Of arrogant power flaunts its regiments,

And lurking hosts of tyranny pitch their tents,

And still the yoke

Of heavy-laden labor weighs on simple folk.

“Our country cries for *living* Lexington!

From mine and slum

And hearths where man's rebellion still burns on,

Rolls the deep drum:

Ah, not to elegize but emulate
Is homage worthy of the heroic great,
Whose memoried spot
Serves but to quicken fire from ashes long forgot.

“Here, then, O little town of Lexington,
Burnish anew
Our muskets for the battle long begun
For freedom! — You,
O you, my comrades, called from all world-clans,
Here, by the deeds of dear Americans
That cannot die,
Let *Lexington* be still our revolution-cry!”

SCHOOL

I

OLD Hezekiah leaned hard on his hoe
And squinted long at Eben, his lank son. —
The silence shrilled with crickets. Day was done,
And, row on dusky row,
Tall bean poles ribbed with dark the gold-bright after-
glow.

Eben stood staring: ever, one by one,
The tendril tops turned ashen as they flared.
Still Eben stared.

Oh, there is wonder on New Hampshire hills,
Hoeing the warm bright furrows of brown earth,
And there is grandeur in the stone wall's birth,
And in the sweat that spills
From rugged toil is sweetness; yet for wild young wills
There is no dew of wonder, but stark dearth,
In one old man who hoes his long bean rows,
And only hoes.

Old Hezekiah turned slow on his heel.

He touched his son. — Through all the carking day

There are so many littlish cares to weigh

Large natures down, and steel

The heart of understanding. — “Son, how is’t ye
feel?

What are ye starin’ on — a gal?” A ray

Flushed Eben from the fading afterglow:

He dropped his hoe.

He dropped his hoe, but sudden stooped again

And raised it where it fell. Nothing he spoke,

But bent his knee and *crack!* the handle broke

Splintering. With glare of pain,

He flung the pieces down, and stamped upon them;

then —

Like one who leaps out naked from his cloak —

Ran. — “Here, come back! Where are ye bound —
you fool?”

He cried — “To school!”

II

Now on the mountain Morning laughed with light —
With light and all the future in her face,
For there she looked on many a far-off place
 And wild adventurous sight,
For which the mad young autumn wind hallooed with
 might
And dared the roaring mill-brook to the race,
Where blue-jays screamed beyond the pine-dark pool —
 “To school! — To school!”

Blackcoated, Eben took the barefoot trail,
Holding with wary hand his Sunday boots;
Harsh catbirds mocked his whistling with their hoots;
 Under his swallowtail
Against his hip-strap bumping, clinked his dinner pail;
Frost maples flamed, lone thrushes touched their lutes;
Gray squirrels bobbed, with tails stiff curved to backs,
 To eye his tracks.

Soon at the lonely crossroads he passed by
The little one-room schoolhouse. He peered in.
There stood the bench where he had often been
 Admonished flagrantly
To drone his numbers: Now to this he said good-
 bye
For mightier lure of more romantic scene:
Goodbye to childish rule and homely chore
 Forevermore!

All day he hastened like the flying cloud
Breathless above him, big with dreams, yet dumb.
With tightened jaw he chewed the tart spruce
 gum,
 And muttered half aloud
Huge oracles. At last, where through the pine-tops
 bowed
The sun, it rose! — His heart beat like a drum.
There, there it rose — his tower of prophecy:
 The Academy!

III

They learn to live who learn to contemplate,
For contemplation is the unconfined
God who creates us. To the growing mind
Freedom to think is fate,
And all that age and after-knowledge augurate
Lies in a little dream of youth enshrined :
That dream to nourish with the skilful rule
Of love — is school.

Eben, in mystic tumult of his teens,
Stood bursting — like a ripe seed — into soul.
All his life long he had watched the great hills roll
Their shadows, tints and sheens
By sun- and moon-rise; yet the bane of hoeing
beans
And round of joyless chores, his father's toll,
Blotted their beauty; nature was as not :
He had never *thought*.

But now he climbed his boyhood's castle tower
And knocked: Ah, well then for his after-fate
That one of nature's masters opened the gate,

Where like an April shower
Live influence quickened all his earth-blind seed to
power.

Strangely his sense of truth grew passionate,
And like a young bull, led in yoke to drink,
He bowed to think.

There also bowed their heads with him to quaff —
The snorting herd! And many a wholesome grip
He had of rivalry and fellowship.

Often the game was rough,
But Eben tossed his horns and never called it off;
For still through play and task his Dream would
slip —

A radiant Herdsman, guiding destiny
To his degree.

IV

Once more old Hezekiah stayed his hoe
To squint at Eben. Silent, Eben scanned
A little roll of sheepskin in his hand,
While, row on dusky row,
Tall bean poles ribbed with dark the gold-bright after-
glow.

The boy looked up: Here was another land!
Mountain and farm with mystic beauty flared
Where Eben stared.

Stooping, he lifted with a furtive smile
Two splintered sticks, and spliced them. Nevermore
His spirit would go beastwise to his chore
Blinded, for even while
He stooped to the old task, sudden in the sunset's pile
His radiant Herdsman swung a fiery door,
Through which came forth with far-borne trumpetings
Poets and kings,

His fellow conquerors : There Virgil dreamed,
There Cæsar fought and won the barbarous tribes,
There Darwin, pensive, bore the ignorant gibes,
And One with thorns redeemed
From malice the wild hearts of men : there flared and
gleamed
With chemic fire the forges of old scribes,
Testing anew the crucibles of toil
To save God's soil.

So Eben turned again to hoe his beans ;
But now, to ballads which his Herdsman sung,
Henceforth he hoed the dream in with the dung,
And for his ancient spleens
Planting new joys, imagination found him means. —
At last old Hezekiah loosed his tongue :
“Well, boy, this school — what has it learned ye to
know?”
He said : “To hoe.”

THE PLAYER

[Shakspeare]

HIS wardrobe is the world, and day and night
His many-mirror'd dressing room : At dawn
He apes the elvish faun,
Or, garbed in saffron hose and scarlet shoon,
Mimics the madcap sprite
Of ever-altering youth ; at chime of noon
He wears the azure mail and blazoned casque
Of warring knighthood ; till, at starry stroke
Of dark, all pale he dons his "inky cloak"
And meditates — the waning moon his tragic mask.

His theatre is the soul, and man and woman
His infinite repertory : Age on age,
Treading his fancy's stage,
Ephemeral shadows of his master mind,
We act our parts — the human
Players of scenes long since by him designed ;

And stars, that blaze in tinsel on our boards,
Shine with a moment's immortality
Because they are his understudies, free
For one aspiring hour to sound his magic chords.

For not with scholars and their brain-worn scripts,
Nor there behind the footlights' fading glow
Shakspeare survives: ah, no!
Deep in the passionate reality
Of raging life above the darkling crypts
Of death, he meditates the awed "To be
Or not to be" of millions, yet to whom
His name is nothing; there, on countless quests,
Unlettered Touchstones quibble with his jests,
Unlaureled Hamlets yearn, and anguished Lears up-
loom.

Leave, then, to Avon's spire and silver stream
Their memory of ashes sung and sighed:
Our Shakspeare never died,

Nor ever was born, save as the god is born
From every soul that dares to doubt and dream.
He dreams — but is not mortal: eve and morn,
Dirge and delight, float from his brow like prayer.
Beside him, charmed Apollo lifts his lyre;
Below, the heart of man smoulders in fire;
Between the two he stands, timeless — the poet-player.

TO JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY

(On first reading her play "The Wolf of Gubbio")

CONJURESS, here

You've poured, all clear,

In a cup, a carven crystal cup —

Pied with lights that flush and falter

And flower again —

All in a three-rimmed loving-cup

Fit for the dear Madonna's altar,

Where thieves and shrews and wolvish men

And wondering children may come to sup —

All in a cup, a shining cup,

Held by the trembling paws and fingers

Of your divine dog Fra Lupone

And him, his crony,

Whose loving laughter lingers

In the echo of song that bubbles so easy

In syllabing: *d'Assissi! d'Assissi!*

Him, large white soul in the simple wee body —
Pulsing, you've poured in a glowing cup
For joy of our generations —
Wine: wine distilled from the art
And the sheen
Of the mind and the heart
Of Josephine
Preston Peabody. —
Fair befall her! — Felicitations!

PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE TO A BIRD MASQUE

PROLOGUE

Enter FANTASY, who speaks :

GENTLES, just now I met an elf
Who crooked mid-air his finger joint
To beckon me, poising himself
Sheer on a shining question-point;
And there he cried: "Who may *you* be?
Where are you bound, if one may ask?
What are these birds that hold a masque?
What *is* a masque? What witchery
Can cause my woodland boughs to grace
This walled and crowded shut-in place?
How may divine Aurora rise
Under a roof? That parchment scroll —
What's written there?" — I said: "Replies
To elves like you, who claim their toll
Of answers." So I cast my eyes
Downward, and read this from my roll:

I

Follow me, Gentles! Follow me
By hidden paths, for I am Fantasy:—
Between the ear and what is heard,
Betwixt the eye and what is seen,
Midway the poet and his word
I hold my shadowy demesne.
And there to-night I act a thing—
Nor drama nor lyric but mid-way—
Wrought for my fairy folk to sing
And real folk to play.
Your nature critic does not ask
Robin to nest with wren,
Yet both are birds: Why argue, then,
What drama is, or masque?
My theatre's art is nature's, when
It serves the creator's task.

II

Then, follow me, Gentles, if you will !
To follow means but tarry still
Here in your seats, for I will bring
Horizons for your journeying,
Till soon this many-murmured hall
Shall be for you a silent wood,
Where we may watch, through leafy solitude,
Quercus the faun, and hear his echo call
In sighing surds
The vowel-bubbling birds,
And spy where Dawn steals past with pale footfall.

III

Come, then, for this can only be
If you will follow Fantasy.
No magic is, except through me ;
Yet I myself can nothing do
Alone ; my radiance 'tis from you.

For if in woods I walk alone
 No light will be around me thrown;
 And if alone you walk the woods,
 Your eyes will blink through darkening hoods.

IV

Come, then, together let us go,
 As birds and men together meet
 Where boughs are dim and woodlands sweet
 With meditation. Meeting so,
 My simplest arts
 Will serve to please you, and unblind
 Your own rapt vision; for kind hearts
 Need no compulsion to be kind
 To their own natures. So the mind
 Amongst you which shall act most feelingly
 My simple masque, and find the fewest flaws,
 Shall win my best award, and he (or she)
 Be showered by my players' glad applause.

EPILOGUE

Gentles, if you have followed me,
Now is no need to say goodbye;
For we shall meet in revery
Wherever glad birds sing and fly —
Wherever sad birds bleed and dumbly die.

Oh, where they mount on wings and song
'Tis we who mount there — you and I;
And where they fall and suffer wrong
'Tis we who perish — you and I:
Our own is Ornis' pain or ecstasy.

So, at fresh rise and set of sun,
May Ornis bring her joy to you, each one,
And Tacita her dreams! — Our masque is done.

THE SONG SPARROW

WHEN June was cool and clover long
And birds were glad in soul and body,
I sat me down to make a song,
And sweltered in my study:
I swinked and sweat with weary art
To tell how merry was my heart.

With weary art and wordy choice
I toiled, when sudden — low and breezy —
I heard a little friendly voice
Call: *Simple, simple, so easy!*
I heard, yet sat apart in dole
To sing how social was my soul.

In vain! — That artless voice went round
In tiny echoes faint and teasy.
I rose: "What toil then, have you found
Simple, simple, so easy?"

Dauntless, the bird, with dewy beak,
Carolled again his cool critique.

Nay, song it is a simple thing
For hearts that seek no reason :
Relentless bird, why should you sing
Who *are* the happy season? —
Still *why!* The root of joy I seek,
While laughter ripples from your beak.

No wonder, then, the bard's pen creaks,
The critic's drone grows wheezy,
When joy the June bird never seeks
Is *simple, simple, so easy!*
While we, who find our art so long,
Still make a subterfuge of song!

TO AN UPLAND PLOVER

CRESCENT-WING'D, sky-clean

Hermit of pastures wild,

Upland plover, shy-soul'd lover

Of field ways undefiled!

I watch your curve-tipt pinion glean —

Slim as a scythe — the rusty green

Reaches of sweet-fern cover

That slant to your secret glade,

But what you cull with your rhythmic blade

What mortal can discover?

Azure-born, gale-blown

Gull of the billowy hills,

My heart goes forth to see you hover

So far from human sills,

To hear your tweeting, shrill and lone,

Make from the moorgrass such sharp moan
As some unshriven lover,
For you are sorrow-wise
With memory, whose passions rise
Whence no man may discover.

Reticent, rare of song,
Rears the shy soul its pain :
You sought no cottage eave as cover
To dole a dulcet plain ;
But swift, on pinions lithe and strong,
You sought a place for your wild wrong
God only might discover,
And there God, calling, came,
And flies with you in His white flame —
Your wilding mate, O plover !

RAIN REVERY

IN the lone of night by the pattering tree
I sat alone with Poetry —
With Poetry, my old shy friend,
And his tenuous shadow seemed to blend —
Beyond the lampshine on the sill —
With the mammoth shadow of the hill,
And his breath fell soft on the pool-dark pane
With the murmurous, murmuring muffled hoof
Of the rain, the rain
The rain on the roof.

IN the vast of night and its vacancy
I prayed aloud to Poetry,
And his luminous eyes grew large and dim
As my heart-pulse quickened to question him;
For out of that rumbling rhymeless rune
He only might know, by a sense atune,

To unravel the anguish, and render vain
The remorseless will that wove the woof
Of the rain, the rain
The rain on the roof.

So I cried: "What mute conspiracy
Have you made with the night, O Poetry?
Lover and friend of my warm doorway,
Do you crouch there too on the storm-soaked clay?
Did you creep indoors when that gust of damp
Raised the dead moon-moths round my lamp
And the wan flame guttered? — Hark, again!
Do *you* ride there — so close, so aloof —
With the rain, the rain
The rain on the roof?

"Ah, what of the rapture and melody
We might have wrought, dear Poetry!
Imagined tower and dream-built shrine,
Must they crumble in dark like this pale lampshine?

Our dawn-flecked meadows lyric-shrill,
Shall they lie as dumb as the gloom-drenched hill?
Our song-voiced lovers ! — Shall none remain ? ” —
Under the galloping, gusty hoof
Answered the rain, rain
Rain on the roof.

THE HEART IN THE JAR

A Meditation on the Nobel Prize Award for Medical
Research, 1912

I

ALIVE it beats in a bosom of glass —

A glowing heart!

It has come to pass!

Ventricle, auricle,

Artery quivering:

No metaphorical

Symbol of art,

No cold, mechanical trick of a cog,

But ardent — an organ mysterious,

Alive, delivering

Serene, continuous

Pulses, poised in its chamber of glass,

Beating — the heart of a dog!

II

And it came to pass
While the hearts of men
Were selling and buying
The blood of their brothers,
Then, even then —
While grocer and draper
And soldier were eying
Their market-news in the morning paper,
And, musing there among the others,
Their poet of words
Stood staring — his back to the laboratory
(Where the poet of life
Plied ether and knife) —
Stood musing his rhymes for a miracle-story
Of Babylon queens or Attic birds.

III

Yet others were there more strange
(More strange, as they spoke in the holy name
Of the human heart, while still their eyes
Were blind to the light love's visions range) —
For they cried: "Lo, the dog — he dies!
Spare him the knife! What have ye done,
Awarders of fame! Will you grant to one
Who slaughters — the great world-prize?"
Yet these are the same
Who cherish the deed and worship the pain
Of saints that offered their blood in fire
For the meed of men,
And these are the same who bend the knee
To One who hung on the bleeding tree
Under the seraphim:
In the name — in the hallowed name of Him
Who raised us from Caliban,
Would they grudge to a dog — what a god might aspire:
To render his heart for the Heart of Man?

IV

How calm in its crystal tomb
It beats to the mandate of life!
How hush it waits in the sexless womb
For the hour of its strange midwife —
The seer, whose talismanic touch
Shall give it birth in another — what?
The heart of a dog once, was it not?
So then, if it still be such,
Why, then, the dog — (cur, thoroughbred,
Mastiff, was it, or hound?) —
What of the dog? — is he quick or dead?
His soul (as they used to say)
In what Elysian field should he stray,
Or where lie down in his grave?
For hark! —
Through the clear concave
Of the glass, that delicate pulsing sound!
Ah, once, how it whirred in the flooded dark
Of his deep-lunged chest, with rhythmic beat

To the wild curvet of his wonderful feet
And the rapturous passion of his bark,
As he welcomed his homing master's hand,
To crouch at the quick command!
Yet it never has ceased to beat: —
Charmed by the poet of life,
Freed by his art and the cunning knife
That counterfoils the shears of fate,
See it quiver now in that golden bar
Of noon — unlaboring, isolate,
Alive, in a crystal jar!

V

The heart of a dog — why pause?
Why pause on your brink, bright jar? Or why
This reticent allocution?
A dog! — Shall I stop at to-day, because
To-morrow it might be I? —
Yea, and if it be!
Even this heart of me

The subtle bard of life with his blade
To sever from out the mystic whole
I have deemed my Soul
And shatter me — like no cloven shade
Divined by a Dante's ecstasy —
In morsels to immortality,
Piecemeal to dissolution!

This, then, that knocks at my breast —
Starting at the image of its own inquest
Hung in a gleaming jar — this sentient thing
Responsive in the night
To messages of grandeur and delight,
Pensive to Winter, passionate to Spring,
Mounting on strokes of music's rhythmic wing,
Beating more swift when my beloved's cheek
Ruddies with rapture the tongue fails to speak,
And pausing quite
When her rose turns to white —
This servant, delicate to suffering,

Insurgent to restraint, soothed by redress,
This shall the life-bard place upon his shelf
Beside the dog — and both shall acquiesce.

VI

For he — artist of baffling life — himself
Sculptor and plastic instrument —
He holds within his hand the vast intent,
And carves from out the crimson clay of death
Incredible images
Of quickening fauns, and headless victories
More terrible than her of Samothrace, —
Yea, toys with such as these,
As, silent, he lifts a severed Gorgon's face
Toward his own;
(The watchers hold their breath,
Hiding their dread.)
Calmly he looks — nor turns to stone,
But with a touch freezes the sphinx instead.
Till last, all pale, beside him — like a dream

That rises into daylight out of sleep —
Death rises from the mystic, crimson stream
And murmurs at his ear: "What, then, am I?
And what art thou whose scalpel strikes so deep
To slay me? Yea, I felt it glance me by
And I am wounded! Give it me!" — They clutch:
Death snatches, and his frozen fingers touch
The scalpel's edge — when lo, a lightning gleam
Ruddies their wrestling shadows on the night;
Immense they lengthen down the vasty gloom
And darken in their height
The rafters of a silent room:
Around its walls, ranged in the crystal jars
Of infinite stars,
Beat, as they burn, the myriad hearts of life;
In lordship, where their lonely shadows loom,
Death and the Artist grapple for the knife.

NOTES

OF the poems collected in this volume, those in Part I (War) have been written during the last ten weeks; those in Part II (Peace) have been selected from poems written during the last two years — chiefly during 1914. Most of them have been published, separately, in the following journals and newspapers, to the editors of which the author makes his acknowledgments: *The North American Review*, *Collier's Weekly*, *The Outlook*, *The Forum*, *The Independent*, *The Boston Evening Transcript*, *The New York Times and Times Literary Supplement*, *The New York Evening Post*.

NEW YORK CITY,
October 26, 1914.

NOTES

MOST of the poems in this volume were written for special occasions. These notes record the dates and events which called forth their expression, as follows:—

I: War

Fight: written for the centenary celebration of the naval battle of Plattsburgh, and read by the author at Plattsburgh, N.Y., September 11, 1914.

In the naval battle of Plattsburgh, the American commander "Maedonough himself worked like a common sailor, in pointing and handling a favorite gun. While bending over to sight it, a round shot cut in two the spanker boom, which fell on his head and struck him senseless for two or three minutes; he then leaped to his feet and continued as before, *when a shot took off the head of the captain of the gun crew and drove it in his face with such force as to knock him to the other side of the deck.*"

The above quotation is from "The Naval War of 1812," by Theodore Roosevelt.

The Conflict: These six sonnets here printed were originally published, together, in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, August 29, 1914. The first, "To William Watson," is a response to a sonnet by Mr. Watson entitled "To the United States," first published in *The London Post*, and cabled to the *New York Times*.

The Lads of Liege: First printed in the *New York Times*, September 2, 1914.

Carnage: These six sonnets were first published, together, in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, September 26, 1914.

The Muffled Drums: These stanzas (published in the *New York Evening Post*, September 3, 1914) were written

with reference to the Peace Procession of Women in New York City, August 29, 1914.

Antwerp: The early press accounts of the storming of Antwerp by the Germans told of great damage to the city's architecture. Later accounts have described a less amount of physical injury inflicted. This sonnet, however, has reference less to the physical violence, than to the spiritual violation wrought by unwarranted invaders.

Men of Canada: First printed in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, October 17, 1914, shortly after the sailing of Canadian troops to England.

The Child-Dancers: The little children of the Isadora Duncan School of Dancing, to whom these verses refer, came to America in September, owing to conditions of war in France. Russian, German, French, and English, they form a happy and harmonious family of the belligerent races.

A Prayer of the Peoples: This poem was written on the day of President Wilson's Call to Prayer, Sunday, October 4, 1914. It was published in the *New York Times*, on October fifth.

In Memoriam: Mrs. Woodrow Wilson: These stanzas were first printed in the *New York Evening Post*, August 13, 1914. Shortly before her death, the earnest, expressed wish of Mrs. Wilson for the passing of the law for the betterment of conditions in the slum district of Washington was fulfilled by vote of the Senate.

II: Peace

Panama Hymn: Sung by a chorus at the Panama Festival for the benefit of the New York Association for the Blind, New York City, March 25, 1913, for which occasion the hymn was written. It was published in the *North American Review*, April, 1913.

Goethals: written for the National Testimonial to Colonel George W. Goethals, and read by the author at Carnegie Hall, New York City, March 4, 1914.

A Child at the Wicket: This poem, which narrates a true experience of the author at Ellis Island, refers by implication to the now historic labor troubles at Lawrence, Mass., in 1912.

Hymn for Equal Suffrage: Written for the Equal Suffrage Meeting (Authors' Night) held at Cooper Union, New York City, in January 1914, and read by the author on that occasion. The poem is based on one of a like nature in the writer's play "Mater."

Lexington: Written for the two hundredth anniversary of the incorporation of the town of Lexington, and read at Lexington, Mass., June 8, 1913.

School: Written for the centenary celebration of the founding of Meriden Academy, and read by the author at Meriden, N.H., June 25, 1913.

The Player: written for the celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of Shakspeare, and read by Mr. Douglas Wood at the ceremonies beside Shakspeare's statue in Central Park, New York City, April 23, 1914.

Prologue and Epilogue to a Bird Masque: These were written for the indoor performance of the author's Bird Masque "Sanctuary" in New York City, at the Hotel Astor Ballroom Theatre, February 24, 1914. On that occasion they were recited by Mrs. Charles Douville Coburn (in the rôle of *Fantasy*), who has since made use of them in the performances of the Masque by the Coburn Players at various American universities.

The Heart in the Jar: written at the time of the announcement of the award, to Dr. Alexis Carrel, of the Nobel Prize for Medical Research, and published in the *New York Times Literary Supplement*, December 8, 1912.

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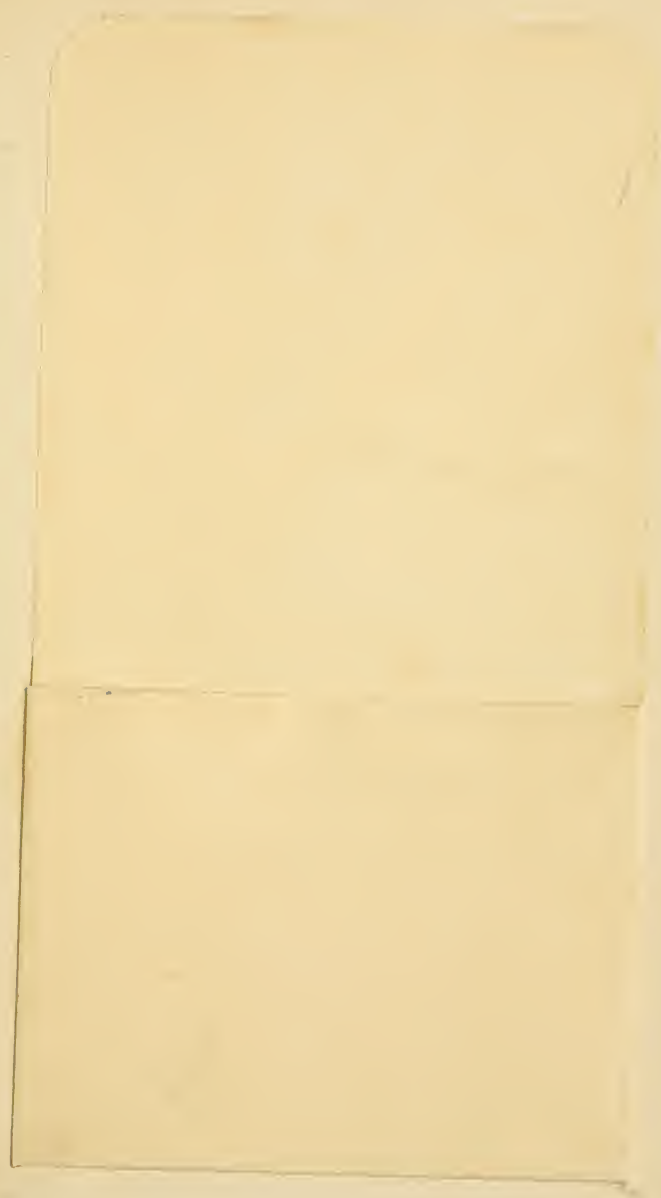
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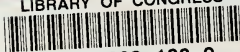
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